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THE

WHITED SEPULCHRE.

"Which indeed appear beautiful on the outside."

BY SOPHIA.

NASHUA:
MOORE & LANGLEY, LETTER-PRESS PRINTERS.
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PREFACE.

As, in the following work, the sentiments advocated respecting Lunatic Asylums differ materially from those commonly entertained by the community, it seems but just to give the reasons for my peculiar convictions and very unpopular views.

The subject of insanity in its various manifestations has ever been, to my mind, one of most absorbing interest. From a very early period of life, I have ever regarded lunatics as the most deeply afflicted of all the human race. A feeling thus implanted has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength; nor can I remember ever having heard of a lunatic without an earnest wish to see him, and, if possible, remove the cause of his mental alienation

This mental proclivity has kept me upon the alert whenever an opportunity has occurred of gaining knowledge from any source respecting the true character of insanity; its various causes and possible remedies.

The first ideas I ever obtained of a Lunatic Asylum were derived from reading a Report by one of its Superintendents, My extreme youth and ignorance had not then enabled me to discover what the severest lessons of experience have since taught, that a truthful and impartial report of any large institution ought not to be expected from those interested in its success and perpetuity. Consequently the Report with all its fallacies was accepted with that unsuspecting credulity which ever characterizes the minds of uninstructed and confiding youth. Indeed, I was fascinated with the glowing description

there given of the beauty and attractiveness of the place, the ample provision for the comfort of the inmates, and the almost paternal affection of the Superintendent for the highly privileged class confided to his protection.

Like many "children of a larger growth," I adopted the gratuitous conclusion that a Lunatic Asylum must be a kind of earthly paradise. Unfortunately I communicated these views and feelings to a friend, adding, "if ever I become insane, let me without fail go to that delightful place."

In 1840, events transpired, a detail of which my present limits forbid, which led a few of my friends to think me insane. There were others, and by far the majority, who dissented from this opinion, and contended that my sanity was unquestionable. But the counsels of the former prevailed, and I was taken to the McLean Asylum in Massachusetts.

After the brief term of eleven weeks my father visited me, and seeing no occasion for my detention, took me home at once. This was much against the wishes of the Doctor, acting Superintendent, who used every possible remonstrance with my inflexibly just and kind parent in favor of my remaining longer on the ground that I was "decidedly insane."

After my return my parents wisely reinvestigated the ground of my alleged aberration, and found that the whole had been a troublesome farce ; a most painful episode from our usual family peace and prosperity.

The result of my confinement was to remove forever all my previous biases in favor of Lunatic Asylums, and to open my eyes to their terrible errors, and to the unmistakable injuries they inflict upon disordered minds I saw there, besides the immense waste of public money, the deepest system of deception, hypocrisy, and cruelty, and the most flagrant violation of justice. Hence I could not avoid the conclusion that the good sometimes done in such institutions, is immeasurably more than counterbalanced by the evils inevitably resulting from the forcible confinement of human beings amid such disturbing influences as prevail even in their best possible conditions.

But this experience, bitter as it was, only drew me nearer in heart to the insane, who had so long been the objects of my deep solicitude.

After the partial recovery of my much injured health, I determined that if ever my native State should have a Lunatic Asylum, I would visit it, and ascertain if its inmates were suffering, as did those of the McLean Asylum, from injustice and cruelty.

It was eight years before an opportunity occurred for me to carry this resolution into effect. But the fact of my very singular wish to go on such an errand was to some of my acquaintances, and also to the Superintendent, who declined the labor of investigating the subject, an indication of insanity, and, therefore, my only alternative was to be treated as an insane person while there.

After a residence there of some months, I found to my unspeakable sorrow, not only that the N. H. Asylum was quite as badly managed, but that the legalized system of cruelty there was far more intensified, and far more fatal in its effects, than the one I had previously investigated. My health again was greatly injured, yet my sanity, thanks to God, remained unimpaired through its fiery ordeals, and it was owing to this circumstance that I was able to gather and carefully garner up facts, the unprecedented and terrible revelations of its secret places of horror.

In 1852 I left New England and emigrated to the State of Illinois, but no change of place, no change of scene or of duty, could ever erase from my memory the terrible imagery of the scenes I had witnessed in the New England Asylums. My deep interest in the insane remained unabated. I determined therefore, with the persistent resolution of former years, to investigate the condition of the western Asylums, commencing with the one in the State of Illinois. I spent one year in that institution, and feeling it my imperious duty to make known to the public its real condition, I wrote a book while within its walls, which was afterwards published in Chicago, under the title of "Mrs. Olsen's Prison Life."

My experience there convinced me that I had spent sufficient time as an investigator *behind the curtain*, and it is not my design ever again to resign my liberty to the guardians of such institutions.

I have taken much pains since, by inquiring at the proper sources of information respecting the condition of other Asylums, and the convictions resulting from all these investigations are embodied in this little work.

I admit that these institutions originated in the most humane and benevolent motives, but facts prove that they have sadly degenerated and that they have become corrupted and essentially diverted from their original mission.

Unlimited pains have been taken by those interested to delude the public, and keep out of sight a knowledge of the most essential facts with which the people ought to be made acquainted.

But the State of Illinois has set a noble example which, I hope, will be followed by all the other States.

Their faithful and vigilant Investigating Committee brought to light iniquities in their Asylums which made every one recoil from the sickening exhibition of facts which, under cover of fallacious Reports and outside appearances, had long been concealed from public scrutiny. The result has been an essential change in the Asylum, and the passage of laws which have essentially ameliorated the condition of the insane in that State.

My humble poem, therefore, owes its origin entirely to my own experience and observation in such institutions. Indeed, it was penned, and much of it was written, (though by stealth) while within the walls of my several asylum prisons.

I now submit it to a candid public, only adding my hope that, unpretending as it is, it may awaken more efficient thought in other minds, and lead to some happier destiny the suffering insane of our land.

THE WHITED SEPULCHRE

TO no attractive theme I now aspire;
No, far from mine the gentle Nine retire;
Not "Heavenly muse" but spirits dire rehearse
My melancholy theme in prosy verse.

Of all the subjects which the human brain
Hath pondered, on the land or briny main,
None so repulsive or so dark as this,
For none present such bottomless abyss.
Philosophers for centuries have sought
With all the wisdom human lore hath taught,
To find some clue, some avenue to mind
Disordered, whence a remedy to find
For this the greatest curse of human life,
Superlative degree of mortal strife,
And sought in vain; no track has yet been found,
No Terra Firma on this dangerous ground,
And, in despair, have let all research drop,
For Lunatic Asylums bade thought stop;
"I've found it," now philosophers all cry,
Elucidation of this mystery.
Here ends the search; the key-stone now is found,
Or rather the philosopher's, on ground
The world thinks safe, but not the world am I,
For I propose a new philosophy.
But, ah! how shall I introduce my theme?
The world will call it visionary scheme;
'Tis too much trouble for the world to find
The truth, when falsehood's uppermost in mind.

All classes of humanity, the low,
The very lowest, e'en sweet virtue's foe,
The drunkard wallowing in his filthy nest,
Find some kind hand outstretched to make them blest;
E'en the poor slave whose lucre-loving master
Rivets the chains to bind his victim faster.
For vagrant orphans, Ragged Schools abound;
Homes for the friendless everywhere are found;
The Nightingales to cheer the soldiers go
To most repulsive haunts of human wo;
And Howards in our waking land appear
To 'meliorate the doom of pris'ners here:
Yea, e'en the murderer's claim for sympathy
Shouts "abolition to the gallows-tree!"
God speed those efforts which propose to save
And lift these sufferers from a yawning grave;
But should they, bruised and wounded though they be,
Monopolize all human sympathy?
Nay, nay! I would not weaken the least power
Which gives their tearful lives but one glad hour;
Yet would I raise that class which all the woes
Of these absorb, and proffer them repose.
For, o'er the Lunatic a ban is placed;
Despoil'd, condemn'd, disfranchised and disgraced,
A flaming sword suspended seems to cry
Over their heads, "approach me not, fly, fly,
I'm craz'd, thy life I may contaminate,
And thou may'st fall a victim to my fate."
We see that sword, we hear that voice, but deem
Not that imagination makes the dream
Of danger in our own deluded brain,
And thus we flee in terror the insane.
Thus all forsaken, (by one public cry
Condemn'd,) they wander, or in prisons die,
Prisons "asylums" term'd, worst in the land,
As I will make my readers understand,
Who patiently will con my humble verse,

And lend their thoughts, "for better or for worse."
Yes, the asylum by the public voice
Leaves its sad victim there to take his choice
Between the evils of a lingering death
Or suicide, to end at once his breath.
Though some this doom outlive, yet thousands die
Untimely, none to tell the reason why,
Unwept, unhonor'd, laid away in scorn,
With, "pity that the wretch was ever born."
Sad class, for you my feeble lays shall sing;
Though to the task no poet's fame I bring;
Though the world's praises and its honors twine
Never around a theme unblest as mine.
"Silver and gold I've none," yet give I thee
All my possession—human sympathy.
Yet O, my task unenviable; array'd
With sickening horrors evermore display'd.
Dread sepulchre! o'er thy cold marble urns
No Venus loves, and no rapt seraph burns;
No sweet sad strains a charm can lend my theme,
My muse portrays the awful—not sublime.
Here Satyrs dance, and Stygian waters glide
In sad somnolency its grave beside;
Its home alas, is Babel's;—demons dire
And hissing serpents madly writhe in fire,
Forever burning there unquenchable,
Fiercely bright, gleaming like the flames of hell.
Alas, unhappy muse! who, who can stray
Through all thy devious mazes? who the way
Can find through dread realities like these
With nothing bright, with lovely nought to please?
Thy topics, themes which satan's scarce could be;
Thy laurels gather'd from the Upas tree;
Thy glories wait in Lucifer's sad dome;
And all thy triumphs there must find a home;
Here moping melancholy sits all day
With none to charm, with none to chase away

The gath'ring gloom from her pale marble brow,
With none to proffer aid or say "rise thou;"
Like "patience on a monument," she there
Pines her sad life away in dark despair.
Here idiocy with vacant staring eye
Ev'n the brute rivals in her mimicry,
And maniacs fierce, with demons dire possessed,
Tear their own hair, beat their own shiv'ring breast.
Between these, all gradations find their woe,
Worse by the cure propos'd, as I shall show.
The question is, — what is *insanity?*
That question must and shall be met by me;
That "flaming sword" I fear not; I have learned
That fear is the worst evil to be spurn'd.
Fear teaches but to flee and hide and shrink,
Fear never taught a human soul to think,
Fear builds Asylum Prisons, locks up hope,
But courage now those prison bars shall ope.
Approach we lunatics with courage then;
Let us assume that lunatics are men
And women, that they reason, think, and love
Like us, and like us raise their thoughts above.
Why should a dark and brooding mystery
Forever bar the mind deranged from thee?
If we investigate, open our eyes
And ears to learn it, all the mystery flies.
Whence is that power, so chaining reason down
That earth we lose, and lose earth's brightest crown?
Is it some lawless fiend that through the sky
Wanders, and lights just where he please to fly?
Then what if he should please to light on thee,
And doom thy reason to insanity?
Or, is himself govern'd by nature's laws
Like other agencies? then show some cause
Why these laws, like all others, should not be
Investigated by thyself and me?

Ye, who in pleasure's path have ever trod,
And the vile dust of Mammon made your God,
Or, in the ways of easy indolence
And luxury, prostrated all your sense,—
Whose eyes sweet pity's tears have never shed,
Who never linger'd o'er a suffering bed,—
Whose palsied heart ne'er beat with sympathy,
For human woe, turn ye away from me.
For such my labors would be quite misplac'd;
For such no pen and ink have I to waste.
But ye, who own a heart not made of fear,
A soul in truth's undaunted power sincere,
Who lend a helping hand to all th' oppress'd,
Comfort the mourners, solace the distress'd
Who cold conventionality defy,
Whose bosoms burn with pure philanthrophy,
Who dare to tread on that forbidden ground
By tyrants guarded, and their mists profound
Of darkness with the torch of truth explore,
Though round thee monsters grin and lions roar,
Who follow, though through thorny paths, the way
That Jesus mark'd where'er that road may lay,
Yea, who intrepidly each nature scan,
Who recognize humanity in man
Of every grade, condition, color, shade,
Yea, all who were in God's own image made,
For such I write; let such their powers engage,
With energy, upon my every page.

Come, then, with me to Luna's mystic hall,
Where, though a dark and and melancholy pall
Obstruct thy way, I'll aid thee how to trace
Sure claims for thy compassion in each face.

Enter this Whited Sepulchre, and go
With me to trace each varied scene of woe.
Pass quickly by th' obsequious bows that greet
Our entrance at the vestibule; not meet
Idly to wait one precious moment there,

With the thick mask hypocrisy doth wear.
Nay, linger not, for higher aims we come,
Nor stare upon fresh sights, with wonder dumb ;
But, "having eyes, see" what new prospect meets ;
And, "having ears, hear" every sound that greets ;
And, hearts possessing, witness every wo ;
And, having reason, use it as we go ;
We'll strive our every faculty to ply,
And scan our opening subject faithfully.

From blooming youth to bow'd and feeble age,
From childhood's tender years to life's last stage,
From every varied grade of warring life,
Here blend promiscuous in one mortal strife
The rich, the poor, the high, the low, profane
And pious, the sound mind and the insane.
The stamm'ring idiot, with the scholar bright,
All in one hall, all in each other's sight,
The quiet and contemplative, with fierce
And raving maniacs mingled, thus to pierce
The gentle soul disturbed by jarring sound,
All, mingled indiscriminate, are found ;
And, by such classifying, all presum'd
Unconscious,—but the truth must be exhum'd.*
Have these their senses lost? which sense, I pray?
They are not blind, but see each sunbright ray ;
Hearing? O, no ! they hear each warring sound
That here in dire confusion doth abound ;
Nor yet the sense of smell, though 'tis confes'd
The loss of such a sense might make them blest ;
Feeling is here, 'tis evident, and taste ;

* I do not mean to say that no classification is here attempted. It is true that the majority of the fierce, the vicious, and the criminal are assigned to the lowest and most unhealthy wards of the Asylum, while a majority of the gentle, the intelligent and the pious are assigned to the upper wards. But it is no less true that each of these classes are so intermingled with all the rest as to fully justify the view here presented.

The senses are all faultless though misplaced;
They hear, and smell, and feel, and taste, and see,
Each sense as perfect as our own can be.
Then they've not "lost their senses" but are found
Victims to "senses," in perfection sound.
"Well then they've lost their reason;" let us see
If there exists not here some fallacy.
Well listen to their "ravings." "Hark!" one sound
Invites us here to pause, not gaze around
As yet, but linger at one prison cell,
And mark the sounds that from its inmate swell.
"When life's fair morning open'd to my eye,
With father, mother, brother, sister nigh;
When nature from her ample bosom fed
My wond'ring infant mind by fancy led;
And when, in youth's sweet vision of delight,
Exulted I in dreaming revery bright, —
Earth's every scene of beauty bore a charm;
Each smiling meadow, ample field and farm;
Each forest wild, with the exuberant song
Of birds, that lur'd my step entranc'd along;
Each verdant vale, each tow'ring mountain height,
Held me with inexpressible delight,
Gazing on nature's vastness, life and truth,
In the sweet liberty of bounding youth.
In such a joyous meditative life,
I could not mingle in the sickly strife
Of low ambition, or the sensuous joy
Which the diviner nature should destroy.
Nor could I bow to the tyranic shrine
Of fashion, or deform the gem divine
Which from my inner life immortal threw
Its pearls of glory to my spirit's view,
But, yielding to my native bias, mov'd
In my own world by the proud world unlov'd;
And so they call'd me mad, have here confined
My body, not my ever soaring mind.

Of the sweet scenes which gave my youth delight,
Imprisoned here, I'm now denied the sight;
Denied what criminals enjoy, the power
To write the contemplations of each hour;
So I must speak them or my heart would burst,
Thus making my existence doubly curst.

Was it a crime, that I should follow free
The impulse of my own identity?
And strive to live myself, and not another,
Ne'er warring with a sister or a brother,
But viewing all as such, God's children, all,
The poor, the rich, the high, the great and small.
Was this a crime, that, signalized, am I
Condemned in prison halls to droop and die?
For 'tis not living here where every strife
Combines to menace my precarious life.
No, no, 'tis living death, a struggling pain
Being ever and forever called insane.
If silently I brood, they say I'm sad;
If I express these thoughts, they term me mad;
Then introversion, like a serpent's tooth,
Gnawing within, destroys my wasting youth,
While from my mirror doth a phantom stare
Of wrinkles not of age but grief traced there.
Banished from home, from friends and kindred dear,
Alone I sigh and shed the bitter tear;
My sleepless nights, my days of crushing care,
My heart oppress'd with sorrow none can bear,
My waning strength, all to despair invite,
Or blast my reason in eternal night.
Why am I doomed in this vile place to stay,
Where dreary desolations round me prey
Upon my quiv'ring spirit, leaving there
The blighting canker-worm of dark despair?
But vain my lamentations, all in vain!
No mortal ear can listen to my strain;
But, to rebuke or taunting cry, I "rave,"

Thus keeping me their doomed and fettered slave."
We leave thee, lone one, now; for other sounds
Invite the visits of our ample rounds.

Behold that aged man with silver hair,
Wan eye, and haggard cheeks, how came he there,
Sentenced away from home and friends to dwell
In this dark, damp, unhealthy prison cell?
Whence comes the right his liberty to bind
Because some slight vagary fills his mind?
Because in reason's realm he cannot see
All human aspects as they seem to thee?
Admit it, but can this the matter mend
To give his rights and liberty their end?
To rob him of his feet, his hands and heart,
Or of the power to exercise each part
As God ordained, with freedom, air and light?
To banish him, and keep him out of sight
Like some vile reptile, odious to the sense?
Can God look on this crime without offence?
Why all his God-given powers compelled to bow
Oft to far meaner souls than his? canst thou
Find more insane ideas to obtain
A lodgment in the most chaotic brain
Than the fallacious inference that he,
Because insane, bound to thy will must be?
Is he too pious? or too much profane?
And in the same excesses quite insane?
Will his absurd devotions here find end?
No, for he finds them now his only friend;
And here will hug them tighter than before
They burn'd his brain ere he approached this door.
Is he instead excessively profane?
This, too, will be increased with the insane,
For many learn to curse and swear while here
Whose ears were shock'd before an oath to hear.
Whate'er his mind, whate'er his vag'ries be,
You can't control them by your lock and key.

Now the scene changes and my searching eyes
Find far away a tow'ring mansion rise,
Where sumptuous wealth, with freedom unconfin'd
Pours every blessing o'er the soaring mind;
Food, light, air, beauty, music, love abound
With unsurpassed magnificence around;
Paintings and ornaments profusely shine,
With all those charms which happy homes enshrine.
But where is he, whose toiling years of life
Gathered these treasures for a darling wife?
Whom death long since has claimed, and left his heart
Bereaved, and mourning for its better part?
"Oh, he's insane," his grandchildren reply,
Who revel in his hard-earned luxury.
O shame, ye thoughtless ones, use your own brain,
If you possess one not too much insane;
Go take your aged parent to his home
Or share yourselves with him the asylum tomb;
Yea, share with him his days and nights of grief,
Till thou feel ready to afford relief;
Yea, bid your aged grandsire to be free,
Or thou deserv'st not thy own liberty.

'Tis night; the ponderous door has closed on all
The troubled inmates of this Bedlam hall;
Each clattering key its office for the day
Has finished, and the last is laid away;
The prisoned victims all are left to sleep,
If sleep they can, if not, to wake and weep
Or madly rave, if inclination show
Such vent to varied phases of that woe
That ever lingers round with gathering gloom
The prisoned inmates of this living tomb.
We'll pace the halls and listen, lingering near
To catch the sounds that summon now our ear.
"I am so troubled that I cannot sleep;
Wakeful I languish on my bed to weep,

And mourn my helpless doom till morn's pale light
Brings daylight scenes of wretchedness to sight.
Yet 'tis a welcome change, for "light is sweet
And pleasant to the eye" the sun to greet.
I rise, but change night's horrors for the day;
Perfected patience here or wild dismay.
The laugh unearthly or the bitter scowl,
Distorted visage, where dark fancies prowl,
Or idiot stare, or utter vacancy, —
Such are the pictures 'tis my doom to see;
While crushed out hope deferred for better days
Leaves either blank despair or maniac lays.
Then howling, stamping, fighting, e'en to blows,
And invocation of the darkest woes
Expressed from human lips of deep revenge
That on their foes might fall their own sad change.
"May our vile enemies be alike distrest
With us, forever, evermore unblest;"
"O God," they shout with fierce and fiery eye,
"Curs'd like myself let my tormentors die;
May sickness, poverty, oppression be
Their doom, or worse, the prisoner's grating key;
May everlasting flames consume them all
Who fill my cup of torture in this hall;"
Now this distorted action is, we see
The sure result of the asylum key,
With all its persecutions dire combined
To aggravate, not cure the insane mind.
But stay my episode, for now we go
To listen to another voice of woe.
"The scenes of horror and of misery
Which in this house of wo I daily see
And nightly hear, curdle the blood and throw
O'er e'en sweet nature's scenes a pall of wo;
The very air seems pregnant here with strife;
The birds of heaven sing not, but wail their life,

It seems, in melancholy sympathy,
And sadly warble forth their melody.
The rays of sunlight through our bars that creep
Illumine but some face to watch and weep;
The cold moon paler grows, as its sad light
Taunts and reminds of scenes far out of sight
Enjoy'd in happier days, ere that dread key
Did lock out love, home, happiness from me."
Thus moans each sufferer, or in silent thought
Bewails a life to such experience brought;
While far away the glitt'ring stars of night
Which shine around our homes divinely bright,
With dim and cold and melancholy frown,
Now gaze in sad unpitying silence down!
Home! friends! what mean those words to that sad ear
Which never tones of love or kindness hear,
Except through falsehood's guise, by lying arts
To give a respite brief to aching hearts
Of that long suffering grief, that blank despair
Which slowly, surely, life's last hope must tear
Away, and drive us hence to suicide,
Our woes than hell's more terrible to hide.

Alas, my hapless muse! still doom'd to show
As we proceed, still blacker hues of wo
Than I have pictured yet; they haunt me still
And I must tell, or haunt they ever will.
Far from these prairies, o'er yon lakes of blue,
Rolls the bright Merrimac, its sparkling hue
Reflected by the setting sun's last light,
Dashing and roaring on in beauty bright
Along each mountain base and each green hill
Of my own dear New England; lovlier still
In its proud beauty even now it seems,
As its sweet memories wake my early dreams.
That river washes still yon Granite State
In joyous wildness, yet my thankless fate

Dooms me, in justice to this luckless theme,
To mar the memory of life's sweetest dream;
For where that river and its branches roll
Occur'd those scenes whose visions haunt my soul.
In that my native, my own Granite State
(I blush to write it yet 'tis still my fate)
Arose a Whited Sepulchre of yore,
Insane *Asylum!* call it this, *no more!*
Alas! could there the sights *within* be shown,
Could those dark revelations now be known,
From those dark archives shut from human eye,
A record *black of black iniquity*
Would then appear to blanch the gazer's cheek,
And make the very stones cry out and speak!
What though its pompous gates open on trees
Blooming with Eden beauty eyes to please
Of passers-by, who stare and wond'ring gaze
With admiration dumb at such displays
Of wealth, of taste, of every charm combin'd
To heal diseases of the wand'ring mind;
What though rich flowers, in gay profusion spread,
And velvet lawns adorn the smiling mead,
Though fountains, arbors, works of art arise,
Green woods and towering mountains meet the skies,
To charm the eyes that on such splendors gaze,
From every tongue admiring speech to raise.
'Twere fitter o'er those landscapes bright, a cloud
Should hover, and their beaming beauty shroud;
Better, in place of that alluring gate
A flaming sword suspended there should wait;
Better, that the sweet songs of each wild bird
Should change to hisses, as from serpents heard,
And fitter 'stead of flower and shade to see
The leafless branches of the Upas tree.
Then outside shows would *true* revealers be
Of what each hour transpires behind that key,
There, sighs of sorrow and of deep unrest

Reveal the anguish of each throbbing breast;
There eyes are blinded with their streaming tears,
And heads are whiten'd though in early years;
There bodies pine each day without relief,
And hearts are breaking with consuming grief;
There turn to pining sickness frames of health;
There unrequited love doth waste its wealth;
There parents learn to hate their children dear,
Hatred deserved; can child keep parent here?
There children learn to wonder why the care
They suffer for, the parent should not bear.
There wife and husband often part no more,
To meet this side cold Jordan's icy shore.
"What God hath joined let not presuming man
Asunder part;" but here a different plan
It seems, is found by the Asylum key
In this our glorious Nineteenth Century!
"What God hath joined as man and wife we'll part;
Let the wife give another man her heart;
At least her presence let her loan awhile
For kinder treatment than her husband's smile.
If she's insane, a fraction of a man,
If he but hold a key, some better plan
Is sure to know for her distracted brain;
He, better than a husband whole, the insane
Knows how to cure by his diviner art;
So let the wife divide with him her heart;"
For sure, if he confer such blessings rare,
He more her love and gratitude should share,
Than her weak husband, who by such submission
Himself the preference gives to the physician;
Admits this fraction of a man, you see,
To his whole self superior must be;
Though a three-hundredth part the fraction prove,*
O husbands; don't you well deserve the love

* When this was written, there were three hundred patients in the Illinois Lunatic Asylum, The Superintendent therefore could only give the three-hundredth part of his attentions to each, making no allowance for other claims.

Of a fond wife? I blush to write your shame ;
And husbands ought to blush for such a fame.
But let me now proceed, and here recall
Some scenes I've witnessed in one dreadful hall
Of that fam'd institution ; first, to show
One ling'ring life,—its dreadful end of wo !

Sad was her fate, to die beneath that dome
The world still falsely terms "Asylum," *home !*
Yet she had parents, and not far away ;
Though now forsaken here she suffering lay ;
Then, day by day, her pale cheeks grew more pale,
Her step less agile, and her form more frail ;
For locks and keys their fatal work had done,
And now her race of life was well nigh run ;
Yet still fond hope, with ever-flat'ring tone,
Did whisper "I shall not die here alone!"
"My mother loves me still, to-morrow here
She'll come and take me to my home so dear."
The morrow came and ended; day by day
To-morrow and to-morrow fled away,
Leaving her hope still crushed till the last tie
Was riv'n that bound her to mortality.
Yet still no mother came, no father's eye
Met hers, both left their suff'ring child to die!
No brother and no sister hover'd near
To wipe from her cold cheek nature's last tear ;
Earth-bound no more, her unchained spirit threw
Its upward gaze and consolation drew
From Him whose word invites, "come unto me,"
And in my Father's house your mansion see.
Yet nature's ties are strong ; 'tis hard to say
The last farewell, when life is fresh and gay ;
Again she rallied, strove with unspent power
Still to defer the last unwelcome hour ;
Still clung to earth with agony to see
Once more her home, once more lost liberty.

Poor child! lie down; resign thy fainting soul
To God, He only can thy grief control;
He only is thy Friend, he'll go with thee
Through death's dark valley to eternity.
I heard her dying groan, I heard them all,
I heard her vainly on her kindred call;
"Where are my friends? Why come they not to me?
Can I no more my much-loved parents see?
O mother, I am sinking all alone;
Canst thou not come to hear my dying moan?
Can I not on thy bosom rest my head,
Ere I sink down to slumber with the dead?
O sister dear! I die, e'en here among
The wild and frantic, how my heart is wrung;
Wrung with a double agony; O, death
Canst thou not pause? must I resign my breath
Ere I behold again my kindred dear,
And hear their welcome words of love and cheer?
One look—one last farewell?"—I heard no more;
Yet strove she ere the mortal pang was o'er,
Yet to regain life's feeble flickering light.
The strife was o'er, she sank in death's cold night!
And friends at home were told "she died insane,"
To hide the ever burning deadly shame;
And home the corpse was borne with that *black lie!*
And angels wept *the dark hypocrisy!*
O angel, Gabriel, canst thou weep again?
Or hast thou, too, become with grief "insane?"
If not, then list another tale to hear;
Come to this cell and lend a listening ear.
Behold, forlorn, a female cold and pale;
Look, she essays to rise, but strengthless fail
Her quaking limbs; she kneels on the hard floor,
Within her melancholy walls, to pour
Her grief unheeded by all human ears;
Unpitied and unseen her sighs and tears.

Wan is her cheek, her trembling heart is faint,
As thus she pours her melancholy plaint :—*

"By friends abandoned all,
All now have taken their flight,
And left me in this horrid hall,
Where maniacs yell with wild affright.
Then nature come ; O nature mild,
Hear thou the prayer of thy suffering child.

In vain are all the calls
I make to passers by,
While doomed within these four cold walls,
Seen by no pitying eye ;
For strangers, too, like friends have turned
Away from me and coldly spurned.

No mortal face I see
To give one ray of hope,
Save when some clattering key
My massive door doth ope,
And food is brought my life to save,
O, would that I were in the grave!

Now, from thy holy spheres
In heaven, my mother mild,
Methinks some scalding tears
Would fall upon thy child,
Couldst thou but know, my mother dear,
The rending wo I suffer here!

Then have I not one friend

* This was written at the N. H. Lunatic Asylum, with special reference to one, who, while perfectly harmless and peaceable, and in the full possession of her reason, was assigned for forty-two days to close confinement in the lowest hall, among the most filthy and wretched of the maniacs. She had besought relief from every possible avenue, without being able to excite the least pity, or even attention to her sufferings, until on the verge of despair, she had begun to doubt the existence of the Supreme Being.

In thee, sweet Nature mild ?
Canst thou not bid my sorrows end ?
Canst thou not spare thy child ?
Then heed my burning prayer to thee,
O, Nature, come and set me free !

If thou shouldst me forsake,
Thy sorrowing child of sadness,
My heart I fear will break,
My grief might end in *madness !*
Then Nature come and set me free
And I will ever live to thee !

Thou, *Deus*, Almighty Friend
Of pris'ners in distress,
Cannot my cry ascend ?
Canst thou not come to bless ?
Come thou and rescue me, or I
In this dread prison house must die !

Those who have tears may now their tears let fall
O'er yet another scene in this dread hall.
A young and lovely wife, scarce one brief year
Since she had given her hand with love sincere
To him who sought it, bound with him her doom,
I found in this most melancholy tomb.
Most beautiful in person, her dark eye
Reveal'd, it seem'd, the secrets of the sky ;
Not beauty only shown in this sweet youth,
Her mind was stored with funds of reas'ning truth ;
And from her voice melodious poured the lays
Of sweetest music, learned in happier days.
When a few months had pass'd since she was wed,
A burning fever came, and to her head

Delirium rose ; wildly she toss'd with pain,
And those around her cried, " O, she's insane ! "
Ah ! luckless hour ! they knew not how to give
Relief, or how to bid the suff'rer live ;
One thing too well they knew, that there was near
A building term'd " Asylum ; " brought her here
Instead of calmly waiting for the day
Fever's delirium might pass away.
The natural reaction came at last,
Reason return'd, but she was fetter'd fast
By locks and keys, and bolts and bars, and all
The murderous apparatus of the hall.
" O," then she plead, " let me not linger here
I'm out of place indeed in such a sphere ;
I love my husband, wish to live at home,
A sacred place from which I ne'er would roam ;
O, Doctor, please in kindness use the key
To ope again my happiness to me.
I've lingered long, with long tried patience here ;
I'd fain be free to join my kindred dear ;
Grant but this boon, my precious liberty,
And I will ever grateful be to thee ! "
He heard, but heeded not, turned his dull ear
In cold unanswering silence, not the tear
Which trembled in her eye or pleading tone
Could move his iron purpose, but alone
He left her daily in her deepening grief,
Unpitied and forlorn, with no relief.
——Months passed ; they kept her toiling, toiling there,
Unpaid, unheeded, fastened in the snare
Which avarice and artifice had laid,
And cow'ring slaves implicitly obeyed.
One morn I met her near my open door,
And thus her woes to listening ears she bore :

" Is there a God in yonder sky," cried she,
"Who reigns and rules the world with equity?
I once believed this, now believe it not,
I've grown an atheist in my inmost thought;
True I was rear'd in church and sabbath-school,
And trained, 'twas said, to make God's word my rule;
By praying parents, pious teachers taught,
But now I see 'tis fallacy —all wrought
By deep hypocrisy; and canting fools
May prate, yet follow I no more their rules.
There is no God; were I this moment free,
I'd flee these walls and end my misery."
Thus having said, her tear-dimm'd eye she raised,
And through the window's iron bar she gazed
Upon a sheet of water sparkling there,
Still pouring her sad plaints of dark despair.
" O, do you know if I were free," she cried,
" I'd jump into that tempting lake and hide
My now unpitied woes; I cannot bear
To live ignored, my husband's love not share."
I gazed with blank amazement. " Pray explain
What mean these vagaries of thy darkened brain?
You surely cannot mean what thus you say?
No God! and wish for suicide! I pray
Explain!" " If there's a God, why do we suffer thus?
With only draughts of misery left for us,
While these ever cruel ememies display,
By faring sumptuously every day,
Their power unlimited o'er all who're here,
Their feeble victims, filling us with fear,
And binding us to this captivity?
Why gives God power to such, but none to me?
For many weary months I've pined in grief,
Without one ray of solace or relief,

Banished from husband dearer than my life,
Yet was I once beloved, a happy wife.
I have been patient, long have borne my pain.
Yet still my husband deemeth me insane;
He comes not near, though distant scarce a mile,
And I have hoped and waited all the while
Till hope deferred hath made me heart-sick quite,
Banished, forever banished from his sight;
I cannot bide this wretchedness; O why,
Why was I ever born? I'll learn to die.
O misery, teach me how my life to end,
And in the sleep of death find there one friend."
I begg'd, implored her on my bending knees,
"Stay thy rash thought, and listen to my pleas;
Scarce yet a week, these doors will ope for me,
And I shall then regain my liberty.
Then hear my solemn vow, I'll never leave
This town, and you my friend, thus here to grieve,
Till I have seen your husband; I will go
And to him all your suffering will I show;
I'll so entreat that he will listen me,
And he shall free you from this lock and key;
Then "do thyself no harm," but patient wait
In hoping life, till I have passed the gate.
"But," she replied, in skeptical despair,
"There is no hope; he will not heed thy prayer;
What motive could a stranger show his sense
If his love lead him not to call him hence?
If that be gone, no stronger claim applies;
Nay, I must die alone, I cannot rise."
Two days elapsed, I now began to hope,
That from her mind its purpose dark would drop,
And that myself the joyful one would be
To aid her to her long lost liberty.

'Twas vain; one night I sought in sleep to find
Rest from the tumult of my troubled mind;
Yet I was happy knowing I should be,
So soon released from my captivity;
Letters had come assuring me that I
Should soon enjoy again my liberty.
So nought had I to fear for my own fate,
But still a dark foreboding lingered late;
Phantoms of dim mysterious horror chilled,
And paralyz'd my heart, my senses thrilled
With woe unwonted, ever haunting me;
Hour after hour rolled on in misery;
Restless I toss'd upon a sleepless bed,
Previsions dire still brooding o'er my head,
I rose at last and gazed upon the sky,
Saw the stars shining in their majesty;
Then paus'd, and sat in silent palsied fright,
Mid the dim spectres of that awful night!
Hark, hark! what sound bursts on my startled ear?
Curdling my blood, prostrating me with fear?
"O God! O God!" she shrieks, a choking strife
Of struggling, gurgling throes, now ends her life!
My friend is dead, by her own hand is slain,
And all my burning prayers to save her vain.
The ling'ring hours of that dread night were o'er,
And to my sleepless eyes morn came once more;
Mechanical I rose and left that room,
Which long to me had seemed a living tomb.
The sun arose, but now its glorious light
Seemed dead and misty to my unblest sight;
I seemed a corpse, while stagg'ring from my bed
With dizzy horrors thick'ning o'er my head.
Instinctively I sought the fatal room,
Where this young lovely wife had met her doom,

Life's purple stream was gathered near her bed,
While on her spotless pillow laid her head.
Her bloodless face was cold, and there she lay,
A lump of stiff, unbreathing, beauteous clay.
He came whose murderous key had caused to die
This victim of *his own* "insanity;"
He gazed upon the unreproachful clay,
As in her self-made shroud she murdered lay.
But could not like Macbeth in anguish cry,
"*Thou canst not say I did it*," nay, for why?
All knew 'twas by his murd'rous key that deed
Was caused, *th' asylum key that made her bleed.**

In the dread scenes of that terrific night,
There by the cold moon's pale and glimmering light,
Invoked I retribution on my head,
If I neglected justice to the dead.
On yonder holy stars above I gaz'd,
Which in heaven's canopy sublimely blazed;
To him who made them, prayed with stifled breath:
O thou Eternal Spirit, grant that death
May not o'ertake me in this fearful place;
Not here, not here, may I end life's sad race.
Spare but my life to leave this house of wo,
And the dread secrets that so well I know,
I'll publish to the world; these deeds of shame
Shall all be told, revealed each guilty name.
By all the thrilling ties of life and death,
By the great power which granted me my breath,
I make before this holy shrine this vow:
On my bent knees, record it angels now;
If I do break this solemn oath sincere,
On me be all the grief that's garnered here!

*The scene here related occurred in the N. H. Lunatic Asylum in Dec. 1848,

May sleep forsake my pillow ; may no bright
Sun, moon, or stars again to me give light ;
By maddening dreams, with guilty conscience pressed,
May all my nights pass without peace or rest ;
My days be tortured with undying pain,
Or, a worse doom, may I become insane !
O Jesus ! hear my prayer, and set me free
From the dread bondage of this lock and key ! "

That prayer was heard, thank God, I lived to know
Sweet liberty again ; and shall I go
Like Judas, to prove traitor to my trust ?
Forbid it, *Heaven* ! forbid it all that's just !
Tired of these scenes, O let us leave the hall,
And visit the last resting-place of all
Who here resign life's burdens and its woes,
And in the Cemetery find repose.
Here may no poet sing in music strains
Their eulogy ; for why ? " they died insane ! "
Affection never comes to weep them here,
O'er their remains to shed sweet friendship's tear ;
No flowers are planted these lone graves above,
By warm affection's undecaying love ;
Here willows never wave, or bending tree ;
Not e'en a *stone* doth speak their eulogy ;
Together strangers here promiscuous lie,
Whose thrice sad destiny doomed them to die
In yon great Babel, far from home and friend,
They found their death, human life's saddest end ;
Together here they sleep, cold and alone,
Their tears all shed, and all their labor done.
After " life's fitful fever " they sleep well,
Though o'er them never chimed a funeral knell.
What duties done, what pains they've suffered here,
No matter, all unworthy of a tear.

They now are judged, their merits not again
Shall come to memory ; why ? they died *insane !*

One here has spent long years of toilsome life,
(I blush to write it,) mother fond and wife ;
But weakness and delirium came at last,
" Insane " they called her then, and bound her fast,
Tore her from a once happy home, her heart
Beat henceforth with a nameless wo to part,
Ah ! thus, from those she loved ; and to her bed
Came sickness then, but oh ! that aching head
No daughter's arm supported, no fond tear
Was shed by tender husband bending near—
By him who pledged a life-long love in youth,
Where now, O husband, is thy plighted truth ?
Could not the partner of thy bosom, she
Who gave a lifelong, changeless love to thee,
Could she not in thy own fond bosom rest ?
And feel thy tender arms around her pressed ?
In sickness, and in death, could not thine eye
With fondest glance have aided her to die
With heavenly smile, instead of bitter groan ?
O, thou didst banish her ; she died alone ;
Now here she sleeps ; peace to her guiltless name ;
This mound, this mound, is witness to thy shame ;
Did they not think, and love, and suffer here ?
Had they not minds and hearts to throb sincere ?
Had they no souls ? did Christ for them not die
As well as for thyself? then tell me why
That thou shouldst thus ignore them, thus degrade
Souls who like thine were in God's image made ?

O nameless Cemetery ! thou to me
Art sacred, though here waves no cypress tree ;
I stand on holy ground while lingering near
Above these martyr'd sleepers resting here.

What though the proud world treat thee with neglect?
Fond nature ministers to thy respect;
The evening clouds as brightly gleam e'en here,
As on the tenants of a prouder sphere.
"A million torches" pour their blazing light,
And nature's countless tear-drops weep at night
In holy dews above thy sacred dust,
And here shall fall, till earth yields back its trust;
In shadowy eve, Philo shall sing thy tale,
And o'er thee chant her melancholy wail;
The green grass wave, wild flowers their beauty show,
And pure and gently fall the virgin snow.
Methinks a spirit voice one day shall rise
From these dim sepulchres to meet the skies,
And Retribution, *Retribution* claim
For those who thus insult their Maker's name.
O, could the life of Christ recorded be
In loving living hues of imagery,
In every home, graven on every heart,
None would be victims of th' Asylums' art.
For, says the Saviour, "let them come to me,
And every misery relieved shall be;"
Then, where his sweet inspiring presence glows,
A cure is found for all our human woes.
Even that deepest, direst wo, a mind
Diseased in Christian homes relief can find.
Are not our homes to quell the world's hard strife?
Its devastations on the laboring life?
Peace to invite, and rest from toiling care?
And for our dear ones plant sweet flow'rets there?
Then, when some member by sad toil oppress'd,
Or by some cause which gives the mind unrest
Finds health destroy'd, and reason tott'ring lies,
So that, unbalanced thus, it fails to rise
By its own efforts, let the cheering balm
Of home raise that sad mind to peace and calm;
Let the weak suff'rer rest upon the strong;

In his sad ear let music's sweetest song
Be pour'd, with all its heavenly thrilling lays,
The drooping and dejected mind to raise;
Let love and kindness bind the heart that's riv'n;
Let his eyes see the holy light of heav'n
'Mid nature's ample fields, 'till scenes so bright
Shall thrill the fainting bosom with delight!
The rising sun, the dewy morn, the glade,
The flowery lawn, with every hue array'd
In vernal beauty, and the living woods
Bringing the charm'd repose of solitude;
The hills, the vales, the tow'ring mountains height,
The wild birds' joyous carols of delight,
Each ray of budding beauty in the spring,
Each gem, each pearl of nature's blossoming;
Let all these charms be shown by some dear friend,
Yet let not here these ministrations end.
Consult his health, shun drugs and doctors' aid;
Let nature's teachings strictly be obeyed;
"Wash and be clean," let water pure be given,
Water, that brightest, purest gift of heaven!
Keep clear the pores, ablutions daily use;
And mild and soothing diet not refuse;
Shun stimulants, late hours, and questions dark;
Use rather words of hope and cheer, the spark
Of wit, the smile, the bright intelligence
To win th' attention and recall the sense
Wand'ring in phantoms oft and fallacy,
Alluring thus their wand'ring flights to thee.
Respect their rights, as thy own rights, and give
In full expansion all their rights to live
In their own ways unless those ways should be
Subversive of another's liberty.
What if they are eccentric? cannot bind
Down to thy measure their expansive mind?
Who told thee that thy standard their's should be?
God made each mind in its own nature free.
But never call your friend "*insane*;" that word

Is hateful, is abhorent; it has stirred
My blood with indignation just and deep,
And made me covet tears that I might "weep
A deluge" that would blot that hated name
From human terms. I'd sooner bear the *fame*
Of almost any sin or any crime;
For that would be ignored in years of time,
Or be forgotten, if my heart were free
From guilt; lost reputation would to me
Return; but who can rise above that low
Despised condition, that most deadly foe
That ever follows, even to the grave
Of one who has been an Asylum slave!

Observe Christ's Golden Rule, which never taught
Such adjectives to use for human thought
Distracted or benumb'd; he's taught thee how
To cure the wandering, to his teachings bow,
With perseverance use these efforts kind,
And care intelligent; be not confined
To rules, or rigid discipline, but know
That rigid rules are reason's direst foe.

Should love thus shown, with liberty combined,
Yet fail to liberate the darken'd mind,
'Tis worse than folly to expect, when all
These fail, to find cure in some distant hall
With Maniacs thronged, amid such scenes as these
Which I'll present behind their locks and keys.
Here poverty barefoot and bleeding groans;
Here sickness unrelieved forever moans;
Here famine* pines with wan and ston'y eye;
And brooding pestilence condemns to die.
Alms-houses and worse "*houses*" empty here
Their moral offal from the vilest sphere
Of unredeemed humanity, with all
Debasements, turning all life's sweets to gall.
Prisons and penitentiaries are here

* Allusion is here made to those very frequently found in Lunatic Asylums who are attempting suicide by starvation.

Well represented, following in the rear
Of pauper lunatics, whose direful curse
Of life, becomes here tossed from bad to worse;
Here slavery moans with low debasing fear;
White minions menacing in fury near
Fetter the trembling limbs, deform the mind,
Maddening those spirits that bow not resigned.
Hypocrisy, all unrebuked, here walks;
And Despotism, yet unrepentant stalks;
Base Bribery creeps with ever hungry eyes,
And crimes of every hue with deep disguise;
Thieves plunder, falsehood stalks, and disentombed
Here Robbery lives and thrives on victims doomed;
And Evil spirits from the sulpherous tide
Of Erebus, triumphant here preside;
Delirium tremens its fierce visage shows,
In blackest hues of horror o'er these woes;
Here ever brooding melancholy reigns,
And dark Despair, with never-dying pains,—
And Death and Suicide in wan array
Fill the whole void, one broad *Aceldama!*
A burning indignation paints my cheek,
When of these horrors I attempt to speak;
My heart throbs heavily, my fevered brain,
Too deeply sympathizing with th' insane,
Reels tossing with a life consuming power,
That threatens to destroy me every hour;
Voice then were idle, speech must silent be,
Come then my silent pen and speak for me;
But, O, the suffering, who can e'er disclose?
What tongue can tell, pen write in verse or prose?
Of those who justly or unjustly styled
Bereft of reason, or the maniac wild,
Or the calm melancholy of despair,
From childhood young to age with silver hair,
All, all are marked not e'en the curse of Cain
Did bring a stronger mark, a blacker stain;
Society hath such consigned to wo,

Hath placed on them its ban as here I show ;
Denied each civil and each social right,
From home, friends, kindred, banished out of sight ;
Consigned to cold and careless hirelings where
There's none to heed the unavailing prayer ;
The tear, the heart-throb, and the bitter groan,
Unheeded by their keepers, or if known,
Censured and punished oft in some vile den,
Like the canines, there kennel'd by brute men.

Rather than spend my life mid scenes like these,
In such unfathomed, untold miseries,
I'd sooner circumambulate the earth,
A walking mendicant, my land of birth,
With all its fascinating charms forsake,
Through unknown lands my pilgrimage would make.
Each day I'd travel until dim twilight ;
Then make the earth my resting place at night ;
Heaven's holy arch my canopy should be,
And the bright stars would bend in sympathy ;
Eve's whispering spirits would inspire my dreams,
For blessed liberty would be their themes.
Yea, even such a life a joy would be,
Were such th' alternative for lock and key,
And the " abhorrent visage " of those slaves
Who hurry victims to untimely graves !
But O, my suffering fellows, there is one
Who knows your sorrows, feels your grief, whose sun
Of life can never set in peace till I
Have told your tale of wo ; then I can die
With a calm conscience, I can die in peace,
When I have caused thy rending woes to cease,
Or aided in that holy work, the cause
Of mercy, which my mind more strongly draws
Than every other claim of mortal life,
More than all others with deep sorrow rife ;
" On such a theme 'twere madness to be calm ;"
There is no Gilead for these ills, no balm ;

There's no physician there these woes to heal;
Physicians only make them deeper feel
(Which were not needful,) all they felt before
They entered the still portals of that door.
We'll follow them, and listen once again,
For now a voice is giv'n to the insane.
"In pris'n and sick, ye visited me not;
Wounded and bleeding, yet no human thought
Or kindly hearts do our sad cells explore,
None but a tyrant's key can ope our door."
Why thus abandoned? left alone to die?
"Because they're crazy" is the world's reply!
O, heartless world, where is thy guarantee
That thou shalt not be sometimes 'neath a key?
Do health, and wealth, and pleasure crown thee now?
Do golden glories glitter o'er thy brow?
Have art and science their rich gems combin'd
To gild the splendors of thy soaring mind?
Do friends and lovers throng around thy way?
T'increase thy joys on every coming day?
And does religion add her heav'nly store?
In these art thou too rich to covet more?
Presume not on a glorious destiny;
Riches have wings and they may fly from thee,
Health may forsake and beauty leave thy brow;
O, will thy friends and flatterers love thee now?
And when these treasures far away have flown,
Will art and science solace thee alone?
Where now the gifts of thy once soaring mind?
Canst thou sustain thy losses all resign'd?
May not some change of fate yet come to thee,
Some tongue cry "Thou hast lost thy sanity?"
Then think thyself in this abandoned place,
How wouldst thou like the world to run its race,
Ignoring thee and all thy happier life?
Consigning thee to this terrific strife?
Then count these all thy fellows; heirs, like thee,
To the blest boon of immortality!

Yea, grant them minds and bodies like thine own,
E'en if their reason hath or hath not flown.
They think and love, throb with a human heart,
And once in life's activities took part,
With more or less of varied talent shown,
And God made life and liberty their own.
But now their freedom's gone by lock and key,
This fact alone should recommend to thee
Thoughts for thy deep compassion, and thy heart
Should throb to mitigate their woes, a part
Only of which can be reveal'd to thee ;
O, then, how vast the residue must be !
What secret griefs o'er all these inmates throw
Their heavy shade of unrecorded wo.
What pains or what misfortunes brought them here,
How deep their sighs, how bitter every tear,
Ah ! never canst thou know, but thou canst see
In every face a trace of misery.
One thing we know : their liberty is lost,
And they lie torn and bleeding, tempest-tossed ;
Behold them ! struggling with a deathless strife
To aid the lingering currents of their life,
Their hope to rally, to regain their mind,
Home, liberty and love once more to find.
Behold the streaming tears from many eyes ;
Listen and hear their agonizing cries.
O heal those hearts that bitterly have bled,
The earth is damp with tears that they have shed !
May not our Savior's Golden Rule then here
Apply, even in insanity's dark sphere ?
As ye have done e'en " to the least of these, "
Confined by bolts and bars, and locks and keys,
The same ye've done to me, for even here
Oft live thy Savior's ransomed children dear.
'Tis such ye scorn, yea such with souls divine,
And such might envy e'en your very swine.
The latter have each want their natures need

Supplied, the latter have no hearts to bleed,
The very reptiles crawling on the ground,
Are in their spheres legitimate all found;
But God's immortal heaven-born spirits here
Are than these brutes sunk to a lower sphere!
O shame, where is thy blush? is virtue dead?
Has from our earth humanity all fled?
"See Bedlam's closeted and hand-cuffed charge
Surpassed in frenzy by the mad at large!"
"Ye hypocrites," saith Christ, "how can you dare
Approach my altars with your vaunting prayer?
Go cleanse your Whited Sepulchres, and then
You'll dare to own that lunatics are men!"
Make clean the inside of that cup which flows
So freely with the lunatic's dark woes;
Say, do your altars sanctity your gold?
Or gold your altars? is your truth all sold?
Fled are your money changers all away?
I fear a few are left e'en here to day.
O that some Savior coming now would shout
"'Tis done, that cup is full, now turn them out;"
O that some burning pen, some poet's lyre
With cheek of adamant, with heart of fire,
With a resistless eloquence divine,
And spirit-thrilling force in every line
Would force the truth on every stupid heart,
Inducing all to act the Christian's part,
Unbind these captives, set these prisoners free,
Emancipate them from the fatal key!

But still some prejudiced objector cries,
"Reform these institutions, bid them rise
From their degenerate attitude again;
We cannot spare asylums for th' insane.
Would you destroy them, bid their inmates rise
And freely rave with their insanities?
Spreading confusion, consternation, fear?

'Tis better to reform and keep them here
Until they're cured by some more genial aid,
And worthier the name asylums made."
I grant much force lies in your argument,
Yet to destroy its force is my intent ;
I would not scatter all promiscuously,
Nor would I send the furious murderer free ;
The gentle to their homes I would restore,
And have them cured as I have shown before.
"Reform these institutions" as you please,
You cannot hold them without locks and keys ;
And these imply coercion, and the power
To hirelings given, to add each coming hour
To each sad life a deeper, heavier grief,
To annihilate each prospect of relief.
It is to combat nature's plainest law
Which to herself doth all her offspring draw.
Nature gives light, air, beauty, ever free,
But nature is excluded by a key
Which locks it out, its victims, in a tomb
Crying thus far, no farther shalt thou come.
Now those who combat nature never win,
'Tis better not such quarrels to begin.
But for the furious, let a place be made
Of home confinement, where to give them aid ;
Let those who love them show sweet pity's power
To comfort their distractions every hour ;
Where no companion fierce would give them blows,
No sounds akin to theirs break their repose ;
No furious hand would brandish then to tear
In frantic wildness from the head its hair,
As in asylums I have often known,
Oft by attendants,* too, these deeds were done.
Nor sounds, nor scents, nor sights would then be free

*These occurences were very common in the intermediate and lowest wards of the Jacksonville Lunatic Asylum, previous to the investigation of the State Committee of Illinois.

To torture and increase their misery;
No food unwholesome thrown as unto swine,
But ministrations sweet and gentle twine;
No eyes but those of love would then be near;
No voices harsh, but those of sweetness here;
No threats, no fury, and no jarring sound,
No woes at home as in such home abound,
Should the insane one be a husband dear
Then would the faithful wife still linger near
To give him food which her own hand prepares,
To quell his tumults, listen to his prayers,
To share his sorrow, nurse him in his pain,
Thus the dear wife would make her husband sane!
Should I admit the point you seek to gain,
That all these sufferers really are insane,
What reason hence can rise I cannot see
Why they should also lose their liberty;
The first misfortune I should deem enough,
Instead of leading them to paths more rough;
'Twere better far to seek to cure the first,
Than add the last to make them doubly curs'd.
Have massive walls and bolts and bars the power,
And locks and keys to sooth each dreadful hour?
And hireling minions arm'd with potent key,
"Puff'd with a little brief authority?"
Have such things power to lure strayed reason back,
And goad it onward to its former track?
O, fools! believe no more such idle dreams,
For your own reason never taught such schemes!
Would you but think and give the latter sway,
Instead of blindly throwing it away,
'Twould teach that nature's laws, thus cast aside,
Were better, if obeyed, th' insane to guide.
For "onward" is the watchword of the hour,
Let Inquisition's dungeon walls have power
No more to menace the expanding soul,
And let our locks and keys lose their control;
Let criminals alone imprison'd be,

Such only as abuse their liberty.
Let superstition dark, with all its gloom,
And barbarism be buried neath the tomb
Of ages past; 'tis time for human brains
To soar above such fossilized remains.
What if some future Newton should arise,
Fulton or Morse to open now our eyes
With some discovery of truth, as new
And strange to us, as those once brought to view
Before earth's wondering eyes, when science bright
Gave truth long secret to man's waking sight.
What if the outside world astounded be,
And shout "Insanity! Insanity!"
Instead of giving the discov'rer time
To demonstrate his science as sublime?
'Twould add another page to history
Of what has oft transpired behind a key!

What strange fatality doth foresight give,
When future scenes do in the present live,
Oft in th' enthusiastic thinking mind,
Which must assert its freedom unconfined!
To illustrate; one history will I show
Which, little more than two decades ago,
Transpired in a secluded quiet town,
Unknown to ostentation or renown.
'Twas of a thinking youth who oft did scan
The wonderous ways of history in man,
With learning small, yet much benevolence,
And a proportion fair of common sense.
Averse to fashion her eccentric mind
Could in its claims no satisfaction find.
Her soul revolted at oppression. Long
She wondered why the weak must serve the strong;
Why, in a land of boasted liberty,
The colored race like ours should not be free.
"All men are free and equal born" she heard,
But could not comprehend what magic word

Or power, could reconcile th' anomaly
That negroes could be born both slave and "free"
At once, 'twas a gross inconsistency.
Reasoning from cause th' effect full well she saw,
By force of nature's stern unbending law,
That two conflicting powers could ne'er agree
In the same government of liberty;
But both increasing, must result the hour
That one, by its antagonistic power,
Must conquer, and the other must expire,
And from the field ingloriously retire.
Hence she a war predicted, and declared
By sure prevision thus too well prepared,
The slaves no distant day must all be free,
And war and bloodshed would the herald be.
Yea, this our glorious country must o'erflow
With human blood, mid scenes of deepest wo;
Disintegration and collision shake
Our land, and in the strife all hearts would quake,
But slavery would be conquered, and would bow,
And the emancipated millions, now
Untetter'd, would rejoice in liberty;
Then peace would come with all the nation free.
In her own way, by new poetic flight,
She penn'd her visions (wild to others' sight,)
Detail'd the fearful struggle of the slave
In his attempts to 'scape his yawning grave,
And in bold fancy pictur'd the stern strife
Which recently has menac'd the dear life
Of free America; the quaking fears,
The agonizing struggle and the tears,
The patriot martyrdom for liberty
The storm, the battle, and the victory,
Th' exciting song of triumph from the slave
Emancipated from his living grave,
The upward progress of that lowly race,
Now in their own, now in their proper place,
The life, the joy of our great nation free,

Now justly boasting of its liberty!
All to her mind's previsions was display'd
By writing and by language thence convey'd.
In vision charm'd at such a joyous sight,
Exclaim'd th' enthusiat-child with deep delight,
"Let earth rejoice! let sorrow lift its head!
For Slavery's fall'n, the tyrant now is dead!
Now morn is breaking in the orient light,
The dawn of that celestial day whose bright
Promise of recreation is display'd,
In nature's glorious second birth array'd!
I see the bending slave lift up his brow;
I hear his joyous shouts of victory now;
It comes! it comes! the bright, the glorious day!
The deep'ning shadows now have fled away!
The clanking chains are heard no more! but free
The nation shouts in joyous jubilee!"

"What means this dream? cried the wondering train
Around; she must be fatally insane!
She talks of war and bloodshed, and the strife
Of death, and freedom to the slave with life
Renewed, and of a new and coming day—
What meaneth this? what fancies darkly prey
Upon her brain? alas! by too much thought
These vain chimeras its disease hath wrought!"

They did not seek the cause of her strange fright,
But judged her mad, bereft of reason quite.
"A war in this our happy land!" they cried;
'Twas born for peace, to peace is sanctified.
Our country is the greatest one below;
War is impossible, as time will show;".
But still she spoke her thoughts, and wondered why
They seemed to others such a mystery.
Yet friends around ignored the laws of mind,
And to her foresights keen supremely blind,
Distrusting reason, called on other's aid,
Casting her light into the midnight shade
Of their own speculations; thus astray

They darkly groped their own deluded way.
They called the doctor who, with solemn face
And look mysterious, viewed th' alarming case;
Next called the preacher who was more appalled!
Then the grave fathers of the town were called.
Daily and nightly solemn councils met,
Who star'd and pray'd, then pray'd and star'd, but yet
None could be found to understand the way
To dissipate her strange "insanity."
The town was in an uproar, all amazed,
And all more than herself supremely crazed;
A gaping wonder star'd from every eye,
While every tongue shouted in general cry,
"Insanity!" that sound like lightning chain
Did fly without a Franklin to restrain.
But no philosophers were there that day;
So to the "Asylum" she was lur'd away.
In hope she there might find, mid lock and keys,
Some charm to drive out her insanities!
Clearly our youth these demonstrations saw,
Yet deem'd not that the nation's potent law
A *sacrifice* required for daring thoughts
To utter; so to sad distress was brought
When she beheld herself required as such,
And in her agony exclaimed, "too much!
Ah, too much grief is mingled in my cup,
I cannot bear this draft; to drink it up
Would ruin all my earthly prospects, throw
Upon my future life a cloud of wo!"
She strove to reason with the keepers all
Who her surrounded in the maniac hall,
To show that a mistake her friends had made,
When to this place her person was conveyed.
She begged, implored, with arguments and "tears
That ceased not flowing," for her tender years;
Forseeing that the loss of health would be
The sure result of her calamity.
'Twas all in vain; no consolation cheered;

No hope, but stern authority appeared.
" Restrain your noise, you're too *excited*, quite;
Cease, or you'll find a cell now out of sight;
With mad ones like thyself we never reason;
So stop thy bootless pinings now, in season."
Thus thwarted, next she plead for liberty
To write to friends at home one letter free,
But this request was likewise all in vain,
For " writing was not good for the insane! "
Denied access to all the world outside.
She sought in vain her bursting grief to hide,
While bitterly lamenting the sad day
She from her much-loved home was torn away.
Pale grew her cheek, and wan her tear-dimmed eye,
Rapid she sank, no friend, no aid was nigh.
———Months passed; her health was gone; a victim she
Became of the Asylum policy.
Yet her " insanity " uncured remained,
Tho' speaking of her " visions " she refrained.

The voices of the Past united cry,
With look prophetic, and with pleading eye,
" Let thought be free, bind not the soaring mind,
Let truth pursue her channel unconfined. "
Such was the impulse Galileo felt
As on the cold stone prison floor he knelt
Crying " the world still moves! " Columbus saw
And felt the majesty of the same law
As, when to the same inspiration true,
His courage bound the old world to the new
Despite th' opposing clamors of the great;
And vile anathemas and bitter hate
From great names of the earth, and clanking chains
Rewarded the great hero for his pains!
'Th immortal Tasso breathed poetic fire;
To strains celestial tuned his golden lyre
Mid prison walls with sickening horrors clad,
Surrounded by the idiot and the mad!

And Socrates, whose name can never die,
For teaching truth and pure philosophy,
In prison was assigned a poison cup,
But, as he drained its fatal contents up,
And fell in death's cold grasp, a voice arose
Which brought swift retribution to his foes,
They tried to chain his mind but chained their own
For, from that fatal hour their peace was gone.
Proud Athens fell in that most ominous day,
Her prostrate splendors in blank ruin lay!

Why fell proud Rome from her illustrious height?
Why sunk her glories in chaotic night?
Because her Empire rose on tyrany!
Because her million minds could not be free!
Her swarming slaves to slaves of gold became
An incubus, her glories to defame;
The Eternal City in its giant pride
God and all nature's laws boldly defied;
The crumbling fabric of her Empire fell,
In dire annihilation hence to dwell.

And later still, the march of liberty
Proclaims with solemn voice, "*let thought be free!*"
See Kossuth pine mid Austrian prisons dire;
See Lincoln by a murderer's hand expire;
Martyrs to Liberty; the dying strain
Of their sad voices—shall it plead in vain?
Unbind the captive, set the prisoner free,
And earth shall shout in joyous jubilee!

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,"
But nearer come, then distant things seem new;
Then of these new things let old tales be told,
They'll show that "all that glitters is not gold;"
One proverb old remains to end the story,
That "thorny paths oft end in one of glory."

Thorny hath been my path, yet should it end
By making clear th' truths I here have penned,
By showing this bad institution where
It is, I'm well repaid for all my care;

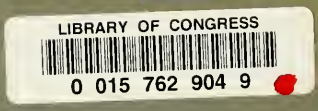
My thorny path a glorious one will be,
And end in one bright immortality;
But this is not my hope; my verse will die
In the dark vista of obscurity;
But yet its thoughts will live; "truth crushed to earth"
Will reassert its own celestial birth.

Then judge not Whited Sepulchres all fair;
But enter, mark the devastions there
Ere you report them fit abodes for men,
Otherwise you might change your mind again.

'Tis true, reports and visitors assure
The public their asylum's good and pure,
Noble and philanthropic, wise and kind,
And healing to the wild disordered mind;
But these have not explored within the cells;
They know not what dark horror therein dwells;
They feel not the deep sorrows of th' insane;
Know not their throes of never dying pain;
They only pass and see the smiling side,
Where outward splendors pompously preside.

But would you know more than I dare reveal,
And what their "worldly-wise" Reports conceal,
Then go as I have gone their cups to taste,
Go prisoner there your pining life to waste;
Go taste the horrors of each lonely cell;
Hear the unearthly shrieks in lowest hell;
Yea, be baptized with their baptisms most dire;
Waste months and years of wo, if you desire;
Yea, let your quivering heart be tortured there,
Till life becomes a name but for despair;
O then you'll swear like Rome's young enemy,
Eternal hatred to that fatal key!

My task is done; I have fulfilled my vow;
My conscience long oppressed is tranquil now;
I've shown the shady side and here revealed,
What selfish interest has too long concealed.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